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5 June 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

SUBJECT : Moratorium on Nuclear Weapons Testing

REFERENCE : Your memorandum dated 26 May 1954

1. Question 1: It is entirely conceivable that there may be a kilotonnage level above which the banning of nuclear tests would be to the technical advantage of the United States. Determination of this would require a careful consideration of the status of United States developments as well as more knowledge than we possess of the Soviet weapons program. As to the United States side of the equation I express no opinion, but on the Soviet side, the following may be relevant:

a. The Soviets have conducted a total of seven tests in three series. Three of these explosions utilized thermonuclear reactions. One of them yielded approximately one megaton.

b. The Soviets would appear to have a family of weapons ranging from small [redacted] through standard [redacted]. The principles of operation of the latter weapon, if it be already a weapon, appear not to be fully resolved.

c. If the Soviets desire to produce and stockpile higher yield weapons, e.g. ten megaton, further tests would almost certainly be required.

d. There are indications that the Soviet plans a series of tests during the coming summer. If these are extensive and successful, it is possible that they could then proceed with their stockpiling program and forego tests for a period, possibly up to two or three years, without seriously affecting their total nuclear capability at the end of such period.

e. It is possible that Soviet strategy and requirements do not contemplate the production and stockpiling of weapons yielding in excess of one megaton and that their emphasis will be placed in the future on the development of smaller weapons for use in a variety of weapons delivery systems. Even so their need for further tests would appear to be substantial.

Our ability to select more precisely among the foregoing possibilities should be considerably enhanced by October of this year at which time we will either have had additional Soviet tests to study or can draw more firm conclusions as to their program from the absence of such tests.

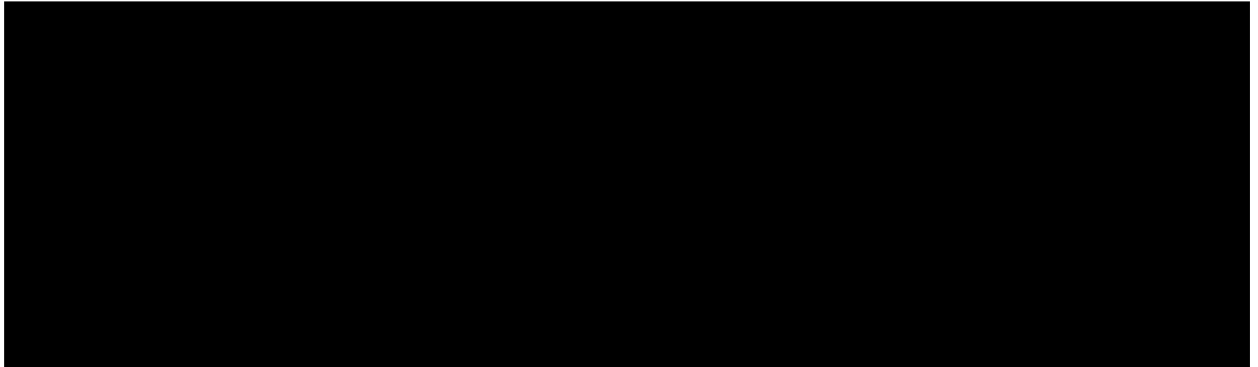
2. Question 2: The possible propaganda advantages and betterment of the United States' relations with its allies that might accrue if we were to take a position in favor of such a moratorium are covered in my Estimate of 25 May submitted to you through the Executive Secretary of the NSC (copy attached). I point out therein that the final adoption of a complete moratorium would be treated all over the non-Communist world with approval and our acceptance would be taken in a great majority of the countries as refutation of the Communist charges that we seek to terrorize and dominate the world. On the other hand we point out that this advantage would tend to diminish with time, particularly if the Communists insisted on treating any such agreement as merely a step toward their announced goal of a complete ban on nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the Communists would probably label our action a trick, now that our test series is just over, and there would be a tendency among "neutralist" nations and peoples, to follow this Communist line.

Since it is beyond my competence to evaluate the technical advantage or disadvantage to the U.S. of such a moratorium, I cannot attempt the relative judgment called for in this question.

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4. Question 4: It is clear that the Soviet public position is in favor of complete "ban" on nuclear weapons and that negotiations, once initiated on any basis, would be exploited by them to the fullest along the lines of a "ban". On the other hand, it would not seem to be impossible for the United States to accept a negotiating position with a reasonably low test limit and derive some favorable free world response from adherence to such a position, even if the Soviets counter by proposing an unacceptably small limiting figure. Our position could be reinforced by stressing publicly the necessity of positive outside detection and insisting that it would be futile to enter into an agreement to ban weapons tests below a certain limit because there would be no assurance to ourselves and our allies that they would be alerted to the fact of breach. This might afford a possible "public relations" stopping point.

(Signed)

ALLEN W. DULLES
Director

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